CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – May 14, 2024

The regularly scheduled monthly session of the Mulberry City Council convened on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at precisely 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the City Council Center, located at 606 Church Avenue, Mulberry.

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kimberly Bruce, Ward 2 Position 2

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

Wilma Peevy, Ward 3 Position 1

Stacy Muntz, Ward 1 Position 2

Sheila Trent, Ward 1 Position 1

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jimmy Moore, Ward 3 Position 2

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor

Dena House

Shannon Gregory, Police Chief

Kay Baxter

Darren Fields, Water Superintendent

Becky Hawkins

Chuck Hawkins

Mandy Oestreich

Sadat Rice

Scott Oestreich

Jason House

Russ Workman

Taylor Workman

Dustin Marvin

Jeremy Shores, Engineer – Hawkins Weir Engineers, Inc.

Amanda Fields

Call to Order

Mayor Baxter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., leading the gathering in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Executive Assistant to the Mayor, Steve Hurley, conducted the roll call, confirming the presence of a quorum.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

Council Member Bobby Tweedy moved to approve the Consent Agenda and the minutes from the previous month, seconded by Council Member Sheila Trent. The motion passed unanimously among the council members present.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Police Department Report – Police Chief Shannon Gregory:

- In April, the department responded to 144 calls, conducted sixty-five traffic stops, issued nine citations, made seven arrests (four misdemeanors and three felony), completed 412 business checks, and gave several clean up orders.

Fire Department Report

- Mayor Baxter relayed the monthly report in the absence of a Fire Department representative.
- In April, the Fire Department addressed twenty-seven total calls: one building fire, and twenty-six medical calls.

Public Works Department Report

- Mayor Baxter relayed the monthly report in the absence of a Public Works Department representative.
- Mayor Baxter discussed personnel changes and provided updates on ongoing projects, including road maintenance and public utilities management.

OLD BUSINESS

- **No Old Business**

NEW BUSINESS

- **RESOLUTION NO. 2024-07 A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CITY OF MULBERRY TO UTILIZE FEDERAL-AID TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM FUNDS**
- Resolution 2024-07 was read by Steve Hurley, authorizing the Mayor to apply for federal aid to improve sidewalks on the west side of Church Avenue from the railroad tracks to Highway 64, and south side of 3rd Street between Church Avenue and Main Street.
- After discussion, a motion to approve was made by Stacey Muntz and seconded by Kimberly Bruce. The resolution was unanimously approved.

- **RESOLUTION NO. 2024-08 A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CITY OF MULBERRY TO UTILIZE FEDERAL-AID TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM FUNDS**
- Resolution 2024-08 was read by Steve Hurley, authorizing the Mayor to apply for federal aid to develop or improve the Park Trail connecting it to an existing sidewalk.
- Stacy Muntz moved for approval and Sheila Trent seconded. The resolution passed unanimously.

- **ORDINANCE NO. 2024-03 AN ORDINANCE TO APPROVE A VARIANCE TO THE ZONING MAP OF ZONING ORDINANCE NO. 142**
- The council discussed a zoning variance related to the development of a new commercial property.
- Stacey Muntz proposed suspending the standard three readings and to read by title only, seconded by Sheila Trent. This was unanimously approved.
- Stacy Muntz raised a query regarding the approval granted by the zoning committee. Mayor Baxter clarified that the Planning Commission approved the entire parcel, encompassing 64.47 acres, for rezoning to C2. The discussion extended to the boundaries of the rezoned area, affirming its extension to Mulberry Wire Road.
- Bobby Tweedy inquired about the implications of the rezoning, which Mayor Baxter elaborated on, confirming that the entire stretch from the interstate down to Mulberry Wire Road would now be designated as commercial.
- A discussion ensued regarding future plans for the property, particularly the possibility of development on the west side. Taylor Workman, representing the property owners, outlined plans for a travel center on the east side, with potential future developments including a truck wash, repair shop, storage units, and an RV park.
- Kimberly Bruce sought clarification on the nature of the proposed travel center, prompting Taylor Workman to provide details on its amenities and operational model, drawing comparisons to existing centers in the region.
- Concerns were raised about traffic safety, prompting Mayor Baxter to address plans to petition the state highway department for a reduction in the speed limit near the proposed development site.
- Kimberly Bruce expressed support for the speed limit adjustment, highlighting its potential benefits for traffic flow.
- Subsequent discussions covered infrastructure considerations, including water and sewer provisions for the property.
- Kimberly Bruce moved to approve the ordinance, seconded by Sheila Trent, and the ordinance was passed unanimously after a detailed discussion.

- **Discussion on the need for sewer infrastructure at Marvin Elementary School extending to the intersection of Mulberry Wire road and Highway 215, or North Main Street.**
- The discussion commenced with Mayor Baxter addressing the council regarding the city's current sewer infrastructure and the proposed extension, prompted by a request from Workmen's Travel Center for assistance with sewer infrastructure. Mayor Baxter introduced Jeremy Shores, from Hawkins Weir Engineers, to present the estimated cost and scope of the project.
- Jeremy Shores provided details on the proposed sewer extension, explaining that due to the geographical challenges, extending an 8-inch gravity sewer from Marvin Elementary School to the intersection of Mulberry Wire Road and Highway 215 (North Main Street) was the most viable option. He outlined the estimated construction cost of approximately $660,000, factoring in a 10% contingency for unforeseen circumstances.
- In addition to construction costs, Shores highlighted other expenses such as engineering design, health department review fees, and construction inspection, bringing the total project estimate to $800,000 - $810,000. He emphasized the importance of securing grants to offset these costs.
- Mayor Baxter then sought council approval to proceed with researching and applying for grants through entities such as the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District and Communities Unlimited. The discussion included considerations for future connections and the potential inclusion of customers on Mulberry Wire Road.
- Concerns were raised about contacting affected residents and ensuring compliance with city ordinances regarding sewer connections. The council also discussed the potential for additional grant funding opportunities, particularly considering unused federal funds designated for water and wastewater projects.
- Following the discussion, Bobby Tweedy motioned to authorize the mayor to research and apply for grant funding for the sewer extension project, which was seconded by Stacy Muntz. The motion was unanimously approved by all council members present.

MAYOR'S REPORT AND PUBLIC COMMENT

➢ Mayor's Report

Mayor Gary D. Baxter provided updates on various city projects and initiatives during the council meeting. Key points included:

- Mayor Baxter initiated the session by inviting Dena House to present her progress report on the land use plan, a project for which she was contracted by the council. Mayor Baxter emphasized the significance of this plan for the city's development. Dena House shared insights into her work, focusing on the development of an Excel worksheet that detailed various properties within the city. She highlighted the importance of accurate data and collaboration with experts like Shannon Scott from the 911 Geographical Information System (GIS).

- Dena also outlined her meticulous data analysis process and expressed her commitment to providing valuable information to the city. She encouraged council members to reach out with suggestions and clarified the structure of her Excel worksheet, which aimed to include comprehensive information about each property.
- Mayor Baxter then provided updates on various city matters, including brush pickup, vandalism in the city park, progress on property cleanup, and upcoming events like Decoration Sunday at the city cemetery and the kickoff for construction and remodeling at the Clay Roper Western Arkansas Youth Shelter.
- The mayor also discussed ongoing projects such as the fishing pier grant application, legislative audit, and grants secured by the police department for equipment and uniforms. He highlighted the importance of grants in funding essential city services and infrastructure improvements.
- Chief Gregory elaborated on how grant funds would be utilized by the police department, emphasizing the importance of equipment upgrades and uniform allowances for officers.
- The fire department's efforts to secure funding for additional equipment were also mentioned, along with updates on community events and initiatives such as the Music and Moore concert and the Independence Day celebration.
- Mayor Baxter then addressed concerns raised by council members regarding road maintenance, sidewalk repairs, and upcoming construction projects. He assured them that efforts were ongoing to address these issues, including coordination with the county for road repairs and collaboration with engineers for construction projects.
- Council members raised additional questions and concerns, including the status of a proposed pavilion at the new cemetery and the lagging of road maintenance on Mulberry Wire Road. Mayor Baxter and other city officials provided responses and updates based on available information.
- The session concluded with a proclamation declaring May 2024 as National Cities, Towns, and Villages Month.

➢ **Public Comment**
- No individuals registered to speak during the session.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss Stacy Muntz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kimberly Bruce seconded the motion. All present members voted yes.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m. The next scheduled City Council meeting will be on June 18, 2024.

Minutes recorded by: Steve Hurley

APPROVED: Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

ATTEST: Carla Dickerson

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer